

Norby Paul  
Joyashri Dey (eds.)

# Global Perspectives on Social Work in Transition

Navigating Technological,  
Cultural, and Academic Challenges



Verlag Barbara Budrich

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# Foreword

It is my privilege to write the foreword for Dr. Norby Paul and Dr. Joyashri Dey. Having spent three decades in the profession, I have witnessed a remarkable evolution in social work education. We have transitioned from a time when learning was confined to in-person classes and individual conferences, relying on physical reference books, to an era dominated by technology and virtual engagement. The realms of social work education and practice have evolved in fundamental ways, with technology reshaping society and the nature of interpersonal relationships.

The book, *Global Perspectives on Social Work in Transition: Navigating Technological, Cultural, and Academic Challenges*, arrives at a crucial moment. Society is currently grappling with profound technological and cultural shifts that pose significant academic challenges. This volume thoughtfully examines various aspects of these transitions, addressing vital issues related to technology, the economy, children's welfare, and diverse areas of social work practice, including school social work, youth engagement, and the implications of AI and digitalisation. It also emphasises technology's role as a tool for empowering individuals and communities, while considering its effects on environmental issues and aging populations.

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the authors for this timely and impactful academic work, which promises to be immensely beneficial for practitioners, scholars, and students alike. This collection not only highlights pressing issues but also serves as an essential guide for navigating the complexities of social work in our rapidly changing world. The insights contained in these pages will undoubtedly inspire critical discussions and foster innovative approaches to the challenges faced by the field today.

Pamela Singla

Member, IASSW Board of Directors



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# Introduction to Global Perspectives on Social Work in Transition

It is commonly recognised that the current social, economic, and political systems are widely acknowledged as unjust, inequitable, and unsustainable shaped by various social, political, economic and cultural development trends. This creates room for aspiring for a better tomorrow by initiating various initiatives that promote a socially, politically, and economically equitable society which believes in equity. Therefore, it opens doors for social workers to act in a scene depicting sustainable development. Global social work perspectives are evolving in response to several challenges, including social, economic, and political systems, which sometimes challenge human rights issues about altered environmental conditions. This invites social workers to act upon respecting diversity and different belief systems, predominantly Indigenous and vulnerable voices, to address political instabilities, violence, dominance, and the erosion of peace. This demands not to be stand-alone but to work in built-in networks that facilitate collaboration with individuals, families, and communities to develop culturally appropriate, sustainable, and empowering solutions. It opens venues for social workers, especially in the post-COVID era, for international collaboration and connectivity to build global perspectives and address the concerns of the time.

The major social work organizations IFSW, IASSW and ICSW, aim to unite social work educators, social workers, and social development practitioners across the globe. Social work in a global context involves understanding and addressing the various social, cultural, economic, and political factors that impact individuals, families, and communities worldwide, rendering multiple services to marginalised and vulnerable societies. At this juncture, social work has to promote a scientific approach to fight social injustice with a theoretically reflected framework that the universities encourage the education of social workers. This reflects social work's commitment to universal social protection, taking universal actions on ecological integrity, economic reform, international solidarity, and social security. The professional and organisational value of sharing strategies to strengthen social work profiles globally enables social workers to contribute more substantially to policy development, which is imminent.

This book was designed to articulate a new and crucial vision for engagement in a new global context. This was an attempt to address the new social work challenges. The impact of colonialism and the predominance of Western cultural and epistemological bias in knowledge and practices are being challenged by social work practitioners and educators, to create dominant knowledge perspectives and practice models, which opens venues for decolo-

nisation or learning to unlearn through reflective learning practices using critical pedagogy. Social work education and practice should be driven by critical reflection that helps social workers question and analyse society's different forces (such as poverty, injustice, discrimination, and oppression). Social work education must value diversity in social work, which can act as a guiding principle for social work education and connect local practices to global concern with a commitment to action. Critical pedagogy provides a theoretical framework underpinned by a commitment to critically reflective practice.

The global pandemic had devastating individual, interpersonal, and societal impacts, necessitating efforts to build upon positive changes while addressing multiple challenges. The themes articulated in the book invite educators and practitioners alike globally to create tangible evidence of social work's engagement with international concerns with local implications. This requires innovation in social service delivery and education while centering on core values, skills, and competencies. This insightful exploration of the book delves into the dynamic intersection of societal needs and professional responsibilities and assigns a crucial role to social work in shaping a better tomorrow. It aims to explore today's experiences and lives that transcend the age to provide new directions. We embark on a journey through the intricate tapestry of contemporary social work, unraveling imperatives crucial to the present and forecasting their profound implications on the landscape of tomorrow. This book navigates the dynamic interplay between societal exigencies and the evolving role of social work professionals, offering a comprehensive examination of the challenges, innovations, and ethical considerations that define the field. With an unwavering focus on the future, this not only encapsulates the current state of social work but also serves as a compass guiding us towards a future where compassionate, practical, and ethically grounded social work practices become even more indispensable. This is a beacon illuminating the path toward a socially just and equitable tomorrow in the intellectual odyssey.

This volume deals with current social work practices, offering practical examples for readers to understand modern challenges and solutions from the field. It attempts to bring about global perspectives, as most of the authors are experienced and represent various countries. The relevance and uniqueness of this work lie in the fact that it combines the contributions of social workers from academic and practical fields representing seven countries. The authors delve deep into a wide array of current social work concerns that are difficult to understand with valuable insights. Social work authors from seven countries deliberated and discussed social work practices and their adaptability in the post-COVID period. The book provides insights into four segments challenging today's social work education and practice: Social work among the vulnerable for a better world, technology, and health social work.

The opening section commenced with a discussion on the vulnerability proposed by Kira Margarete Barut, who states that advancing diversity while

working among youth in the context of Germany needs to emphasize the importance of conceptual work to enhance relevance and meaning, advocate for a community-centric approach, and underscore the necessity of developing robust diversity skills among professionals. The current challenges can only be met tomorrow by expanding and formalising professionalism within the field. The diversity of youth work in social work offers actionable insights for improving practices and competencies to ensure that diversity is embraced and utilised.

The ongoing armed conflict in Ukraine places the social work profession at a crossroads and invites social workers to play a vital role in resilience and empowerment. Drawing from experiences, Tetyana Semigina and her colleagues unveil sketches of the creative and innovative interventions and strategies implemented in the country, fostering resilience amid the war and addressing ethical dilemmas. They argue that the trajectory of future social work practices, especially in conflict or war-induced areas, depends on the profession's dynamic response to conflict demands. The authors present vital lessons for global social work education, advocating curriculum reforms for adaptive, flexible, and prepared practitioners addressing complex emergencies and post-conflict scenarios, as this sets the foundation for a globally relevant and resilient social work profession capable of navigating uncertainty and fostering hope.

Ivania Delgado, based on the lived experience of adjuncts as educators in the the USA, argues that working conditions within a multi class system disempower, exploit, and marginalise them through the classification system and methods of adjunctification. This shows a dire reality of low wages, lack of job security, absence of protection, lack of health insurance, lack of paid leave, and lack of voice, which forces educators/workers to survive in this inequitable economic system. The author introduces critical pedagogy and conflict theory lenses, revealing educators' challenges and how these conditions serve the status quo. The author attempts to connect the multi class system within academia and its impact of domination and power to a culture of silence during periods of fascism and genocide, engaging in an anti-oppressive praxis for themselves and their communities.

In the transition from war-affected areas of social work to strategies for women empowerment, Norby Paul, Joyashri Dey & Monisha U suggest that COVID-19 lockdown measures have resulted in a surge in domestic violence cases, further endangering the lives of women, although women contribute to sustaining development. Reflecting on Schumpeter's Innovation Theory, Liberal Feminist Theory, Resource Mobilisation Theory, Theory of Change, and Empowerment Theory, their chapter opens a discussion based on the assumption that post-COVID-19 poverty is a new dimension that requires addressing the risks, vulnerability, and consumerism enshrined by neoliberalism, power inequality, stability, and sustainability. Against the backdrop of Kudum-

bashree as a Women's Collective in Kerala and as an example of Women's empowerment initiatives, the authors argue that women's empowerment initiatives have reached a crossroads after COVID-19 despite their contributions. Therefore, in the post-COVID era, it must be the interplay of innovative theory, resource mobilisation, theory of change, and empowerment theory that led to post-COVID women's sustained development processes. This requires a creative, sustainable strategy that promotes equality and distributive justice, where social workers have a crucial role as strategists committed to social space for marginalized groups. This can facilitate gender landscaping that provides power to attract and respond to needs by utilising the development of a partnership (SDG 17) focusing on sustainability, leading to sharing knowledge, technology, and resources, employing a strategy to overcome poor resource mobilisation by identifying, partnering, and implementing for women's integral growth.

The section on technological social work for better social work practice discusses on the narrative of a comprehensive overview of the impacts of artificial intelligence on social work education and practice, focusing on practical applications. Looking ahead to possible ways of technology adoption, Ahmed Thabet Helal Ibrahim argues that technology impacts the integration of artificial intelligence in social work as it challenges social work practitioners in the wake of adopting AI technology along with opportunities. Additionally, the author delves into the ethics of artificial intelligence in social work and outlines the skills necessary for working in an AI-enhanced environment that demands excellence on par with other professions.

By understanding the nuanced dynamics between digital influence and academic burnout, educators and policymakers Safiya R and her team further suggest targeted interventions in India to support students in navigating the digital landscape while maintaining their wellbeing and academic success, which mandates the presence of school social workers in India. This includes the need for educational programs that provide professionals with the abilities and knowledge they need to handle students' various mental health needs. This chapter suggests that introducing a mandatory school social worker in India holds great potential for enhancing the mental health support available to students. In continuation, Ibrahim Sabry Ahmed presents the case of Egyptian social work as the most important historical organisation that contributed to the emergence of technological social work in the country. The author's work on Egyptian social work attempts to formulate a concept for technological social work that includes initiatives, programs, projects, innovations, and the most important challenges facing technological social work in Egypt. The discussion illustrates that technological social work in Egypt holds immense potential to address complex social issues, bridge resource gaps, and encourages readers to engage in further research, collaboration, and advocacy to support the growth and impact of technological and social work in Egypt.

Culturally sensitive social work for tomorrow's progress is yet another arena that was unearthed by the authors in the book. Leila Salimova and Bermet Egemberdieva present how suicide is perceived in Kyrgyzstan and the country's legal framework. Revealing valuable insights from multiple studies to sketch a nuanced understanding of the interdisciplinary relationship between mental health, social support, and the legal system, the authors argue that the cultural perspective is a hindering or a helping factor for social service providers for effective suicide interventions in Kyrgyzstan. Recognising the diversity of cultural beliefs *is* necessary to build skills and knowledge, foster trust communication, and tailor interventions to individual needs that social workers can impart. Their chapter concludes with practical suggestions for enhancing social workers' cultural competencies appropriate to Kyrgyzstan, grounded in global best practices, which can elevate the effectiveness of intervention efforts to prevent suicide in the Kyrgyzstani context.

Working with the vulnerable, especially people with disabilities, demands further insights that culturally fit strategies and techniques, as Ishari Gunarathna and Chandima Jayasena argue. They suggest four main themes to discuss while practicing social work among people with disabilities in the Sri Lankan context. Disability initiatives, cultural attitudes toward people with disabilities, family roles, support systems, and the influence of religious and moral attitudes on social perceptions toward people with disabilities are significant concerns of the country. The authors discuss the crucial role of families in socialising and supporting people with disabilities, the utility of raising awareness among young people to increase public understanding of people with disabilities, and the promotion of a culturally significant approach to working with them. The role of grassroots initiatives and the unique insights of individuals with disabilities require platforms and facilitation by social workers. This further emphasises the vital relevance of social work interventions in the integration process of people with disabilities in Sri Lanka. The section ends with the arguments made by Priyadarshini K. and Lakshmi J. that India has continued the evolution of regularisation and professionalisation in social work and needs to develop a collaborative approach among educators, practitioners, and policymakers to enhance the profession's capacity to respond to contemporary social challenges. The authors describe the multifaceted landscape dynamics of professionalisation and regularisation in social work from an Indian perspective. Through their work, the authors shed light on processes, challenges, and ramifications related to improving legal and professional structures that govern social work practices in India. The regularisation process can help increase the recognition of this profession, as there is a growing awareness of complex social issues.

The fourth part of the book addresses health social work and attempts to provide new directions for social work interventions in the health sector. The section over arches adolescents, women, older people, and social work inter-

ventions from Indian perspectives. The chapter by Boban K.K. presents various environmental factors of successful aging. Using confirmatory factor analysis, the author identifies the importance of efforts to preserve the balance of nature and promote healthy environments that influence the successful aging of a person. This study demonstrates that social workers play a crucial role in preserving natural environments in the context of global warming and climatic changes to facilitate successful aging. This suggests social work intervention in the current scenario in India, especially in the state of Kerala, where health indices are equal to those of developed countries. Analysing the geriatric care policies of Kerala, which are parallel to developed countries, Manju Jose argues that social workers can make a difference in several key ways in terms of geriatric care, especially in advocating for comprehensive, inclusive, and effective elderly care policies and services that meet people's needs. Developing community-based programs and support networks to combat social isolation among the elderly, educating the public and policymakers on the evolving challenges, and confronting the prerequisites of the elderly care to ensure their voices to be heard. The author notes that by taking on these critical roles, geriatric social workers are helping ensure that Kerala's aging population receives the compassionate, holistic care and support they deserve. This opens avenues to recognise the inevitable reality that geriatric social work is crucial as the state grapples with the realities of a rapidly aging society.

Kavitha VRS argues that the changes in the structure and function of the joint family, migration of children, death of a spouse, economic insecurity, and evolving notions of the family have altered the living arrangements of the elderly and shifted geriatric care and the forms of services. Facing complex healthcare issues with limited mobility, fixed income, stress, and social isolation, older adults often confront hardships that necessitate support and invite new paradigms in care policies and practices. Therefore, the author attempts to evolve a conceptual framework and provide a broader understanding of geriatric care, factors contributing to a paradigm shift in geriatric care, geriatric services, and geriatric social work, especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, the author provides a new direction in geriatric care and calls for geriatric social work as a solution.

Dealing with adolescents with multiple problems is quite challenging, especially when dealing with adolescents addicted to the Internet, which is a health issue combined with various dimensions. Preeti Hossain, Prasad Kannankanti, and Surjit Prasad urge that parents should balance freedom with boundaries, have open dialogues, and warn against excessive online usage to prevent Internet addiction among adolescents. Parental attachment quality should be considered as a key factor in this regard. Internet addiction causes family distress compared to other factors, and the use of parental control and monitoring is therefore mandatory to prevent Internet addiction and behavioral issues. The authors argue that social workers can perform multiple interven-

tions by adapting primary social work methods, thereby helping parents apply optimal parenting styles.

The next chapter focuses on the multifaceted experiences of females during the postpartum period and highlights the need for the integrated well-being of new mothers to face psychosocial challenges, family support structures, social influences, and societal pressures. Deepika Krishnan P. presents a diverse array of issues postpartum individuals' face, with particular attention paid to the interplay between personal circumstances and external factors. By elucidating these complexities, the author endeavors to contribute to a deeper understanding of postpartum well-being and to inform strategies for holistic support with a direct intervention social work model.

The closing chapter of this book, authored by Gitanjali Sharma and Joyashri Dey talks about the crucial yet often overlooked role of gender equality in climate adaptation, with a specific focus on Barak Valley in North-Eastern India. Situated in a region where ecological vulnerabilities intersect with socio-economic disparities, the chapter highlights how climate change disproportionately affects the health and well-being of men and women which underscoring the need for gender-sensitive adaptation strategies. Grounded in a critical feminist ontological perspective and a constructivist epistemology, this research examines the intricate relationship between gender and environmental challenges. Employing a mixed-methods approach, it integrates quantitative surveys with qualitative insights from interviews, focus groups, and case studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of gendered climate impacts and responses. Emphasising the importance of inclusive policies and community-driven adaptation measures, this chapter contributes to the broader discourse on equitable and effective climate resilience in North-East India.

The book's chapters are research-driven reflections, both from academia and practice. They are well-integrated to provide future directions when the hardcore reality of the traditional mode of service delivery is challenged. The book is thus designed to engage the social work fraternity and act as a catalyst for future action as it deals with the implications of today's challenges. The chapters deal with broad arenas of social work and suggest the reader's practical solutions with the orientation of global social work. This provides readers with easy connectivity to local experiences, particularly after COVID-19. The chapters offer adequate reflections on international social work challenges after the COVID-19 pandemic. It has challenged social workers to practice divergently and creatively to meet demands of the time. Thus, this book will serve as a global resource, both academicians and practitioners, enlightening them on and addressing the trends and challenges of social work.

Norby Paul & Joyashri Dey

Editors



Part 1  
Social Work among the Vulnerable  
for a Better World



# Unlocking Diversity Potential in Social Work: Theories, Empirical Findings, and Emerging Competencies in Open Youth Work

*Kira Margarete Barut*

## Abstract

This chapter explores the integration of diversity into social work with a particular focus on open youth work. The theoretical section delves into the foundational concepts of diversity and inclusion, examining how these principles underpin the practice of diversity-conscious social work. It reviews the professional discourse surrounding these concepts and provides a critical framework for understanding their application in social work settings. An empirical analysis was conducted to assess current practices and attitudes towards diversity in open youth work. This section evaluates whether diversity is perceived as an intrinsic value or procedural requirement, investigates how target group orientation reflects diversity, and highlights specific practices that exemplify diversity-sensitive approaches, such as girls' work. Additionally, it examines innovative practices, such as active target group control, which challenge conventional methods and offers new perspectives. This chapter proposes recommendations for advancing diversity in open youth work. It emphasises the importance of conceptual work to enhance relevance and meaning, advocates for a community-centric approach, and underscores the necessity of developing robust, diverse skills among professionals. The recommendations also stress the need to expand and formalise professionalism within the field. In conclusion, this chapter aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of diversity in social work and offers actionable insights for improving practices and competencies in open youth work, ensuring that diversity is embraced and utilised effectively.

Keywords: Diversity, Qualitative Study, Social Work, Youth Work, Administration, Skills

## Introduction

Addressing diversity is unavoidable in today's open and culturally diverse societies. As a concept and term, diversity pervades our daily lives as an exogenous factor (cf. Deichsel, 2023, p. 40; Leiprecht, 2011a, p. 10). The concept of diversity is central to social work and is traditionally linked to themes of difference and inequality (cf. Nauerth, 2012, p.56). In social work, the discourse on diversity has long been present (cf. Deichsel, 2023, p. 40; Leiprecht 2011a, p. 10). Diversity is a trendy term and enjoys a surge, yet it is frequently used in an inflationary manner, appearing devoid of substance (cf. Barut, 2023, pp. 195ff.). The rise of the term coincides with an increasing cultural division in Western societies and is observed only in specific cultural milieus.

In particular, diversity characterises the field of open youth work, as the variety of offerings in this area represent recognised quality features (cf. Deinet et al., 2021). Simultaneously, open youth work faces societal, field- specific, and sociopolitical challenges. Socio-political and societal developments, influenced by impulses from various discourses, affect pedagogical work. This includes current debates and/or politically charged events. Among these are debates surrounding diversity in society, which are not only interpreted positively but also entail challenges (cf., Gramelt, 2021, p. 7; Weltzien & Albers, 2014, p. 5).

Municipalities delegate the political task of engaging with diversity to all employees and the population through the implementation of concepts such as the Diversity and Integration Concept of the City of Frankfurt am Main in Germany (cf. City of Frankfurt am Main – Integration Department, 2011) <sup>1</sup>. As part of a case study, the concept of Frankfurt am Main was commented upon by specialists in administration and social workers in open youth work within the city, along with assessments of their own diversity competence and everyday handling of diversity. The negotiations form the fundamental of the chapter, which presents the results from a case study called “Diversity in Social Work: A Qualitative Study on Discursive Negotiations of Municipal Diversity Concepts in Administration and in the Field of Open Youth Work Using the Example of Frankfurt am Main in Germany” (cf. Barut, 2024, pp. 56ff.; Barut, 2023, pp. 191ff.; Barut, 2021, pp. 89ff.).

The study provides a basis for suggestions for future social work in the area of open youth work, with specifications in diversity-conscious social work. Therefore, the implication of diversity as a guiding compass is used to

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1 Mrs. Barut's research project is situated as a dissertation project at the inter-university doctoral center for Social Work of the Hessian Universities of Applied Sciences. Supervision is provided by Professor Dr. Lotte Rose at the Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences in Germany.

direct the future of diversity-conscious social work in open youth work, while the current theory is displayed and data from the study are presented to have a look at current practice and theoretical considerations. The analysis focuses on the gaps identified in the results of the study to lead to future directions. Based on the results of the study, what social work needs in the future to promote diversity will be discussed, with a focus on action-leading skills and calls for action in the future. The focus of the discussion is the question of what the concept needs in order to be or remain sustainable in future open youth work.<sup>2</sup>

## 1. Theoretical View of Diversity and Diversity-Conscious Social Work

On a theoretical level, this section presents an approach to the concept of diversity and how it is linked to the concept of inclusion. Following this exposition, the professional discourse on diversity-conscious social work was delineated. Conceptual-programmatic contributions to diversity-sensitive and inclusion-oriented work are presented in this professional discourse. This discourse is primarily practical-methodological and programmatic-normative in nature, which is why this section highlights applied and oriented methods and approaches.

### 1.1 Diversity

The concept of diversity has been inconsistently defined, which can be attributed to its complexity (Dobusch, 2015, p. 30; Krell & Sieben, 2010, p. 49). Internationally, there are two fundamental approaches to diversity. The first approach originates from the Black Civil Rights Movement in the USA and the political struggles of various movements, such as women's and disability movements. The human rights-based approach aims to achieve equal opportunities and reduce discrimination (Gregull, 2018; Zacharaki, 2015, p. 17). The second approach, corporate "Diversity Management", emerged in response to anti-discrimination laws in the USA and aims to leverage employee diversity for business goals (Gregull 2018). These two approaches are also discussed in terms of "Diversity as a Business Case", which is primarily economically fo-

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2 All quotes used in this chapter, whether direct or indirect, have been freely translated by the author of the chapter. The original quotes are in German; hence they have been translated into English.

cused, as opposed to the "moral case", which is justified on moral and ethical grounds with demands for redistribution and justice (Mensi-Klarbach, 2012, pp. 63ff.; Vinz & Schiederig, 2010, p. 27; Salzbrunn, 2014, pp. 28f.).

In politics and institutions, an increasing number of administrations in Europe and Germany are striving to implement "diversity mainstreaming". This involves early consideration of social diversity in the development and implementation of laws, programs, and measures across all sectors (Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes, 2015, p. 12). The focus of diversity mainstreaming is on social justice and ensuring equal opportunities and participation for all individuals in society rather than on economic profit (Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes, 2015, p. 12).

A crucial aspect of justice-oriented diversity approaches is the view of diversity as an opportunity and a potential. This perspective follows a resource-oriented approach rather than a problem-oriented one (Gregull, 2018; Vielfalt, 2017, p. 13). Diversity discourse emphasises recognising human diversity and the pluralisation of life forms in their individual, social, and political dimensions. Instead of viewing differences as problems, they are viewed as valuable contributions that should be promoted. Diversity not only values variety but also addresses discrimination, requiring strategies across various societal areas to reduce discrimination and enhance participation (Gregull, 2018).

## 1.2 Diversity and Inclusion

Emphasizing a justice-oriented view of diversity, this approach is crucial for its application in the social sector (cf., Zacharaki, 2015, p. 17). In social work, diversity primarily aims to address social inequalities. This includes overcoming disadvantages, recognising diversity, fostering a sense of belonging, and eliminating exclusion based on the principle of difference (Aschenbrenner-Wellmann, 2009, p. 78, according to Honneth, 1998).

In diversity processes, the analysis of structural exclusion takes central stage to identify areas for action. Structures must be changed so that all individuals can unfold their potential equally and have access rights (Zacharaki, 2015, p. 17, cited in Diakonie Rheinland-Westfalen-Lippe, 2013, p. 8).

Schreiner and Köngeter (2020) describe a development in which the concept of diversity is often expanded to include the concept of inclusion (cf. Schreiner & Köngeter, 2020, p. 128, cited in Barak, 2015). Nentwich and Binswanger (2020) also describe a shift away from diversity management, which primarily emphasises the economic benefits of diversity, towards "Diversity and Inclusion" as a new formula for addressing difference and diversity (Nentwich and Binswanger, 2020, p. 111). The concept of "inclusion" focuses on the participation and recognition of all employees within an organisation.

Additionally, it scrutinises the assumptions of "normalcy" and associated power dynamics and privileges (cf. Nentwich and Binswanger, 2020, p. 111). Weltzien and Albers (2014) also argued that the two concepts are closely linked (cf. Weltzien & Albers, 2014, p. 4).

Schreiner and Köngeter (2020) refer to Hanappi-Egger and Hofmann (2012), who illustrate that diversity management can stimulate organisational learning to develop inclusive organisational cultures: "In this perspective, diversity, diversity management, and inclusion are not separable from each other but must be related to each other in the context of organisational culture" (cf. Schreiner & Köngeter, 2020, p. 129).

Göhlich (2013) refers to an internationally recognised definition of diversity by Gardenswartz and Rowe: "Diversity encompasses all of the ways that humans are both similar and different" (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1998, cited in Göhlich, 2013, p. 8). Considering differences and similarities within the framework of the concept of diversity is a widespread assumption that is supported by concepts such as interdependencies and intersectionality (cf. Finke, 2005, p. 20; Hansen, 2007, p. 25; Krell & Sieben, 2010, pp. 49f.).

Walgenbach (2014) suggests that diversity can be identified as a 'Traveling Concept'. Discourse originating from business and management studies is transferred to the educational sciences (Walgenbach, 2014, p. 92).

Walgenbach's (2014) definition of diversity includes the appreciation of organisations' social group characteristics or identities. In this context, diversity characteristics are seen as positive resources for educational organisations, and the diversity of organisational members is thus acknowledged according to Walgenbach. "The pedagogical goal is the positive handling of diversity as well as the development of diversity competencies" (Walgenbach, 2014, p. 92). Walgenbach further elaborates that in German language educational science, two currents can be identified that draw on different traditions of diversity management: affirmative diversity management approaches and power-sensitive or power-critical diversity approaches (cf., Walgenbach, 2014, pp. 92 and 101). Power-sensitive diversity approaches criticise pedagogy for not being guided by economic profit logic (cf. Walgenbach, 2014, p. 101, referring to Perko and Czollek, 2007, p. 162; Scherr, 2008, p. 53; Leiprecht, 2009, p. 203). Walgenbach states that affirmative diversity approaches always refer to anti-discrimination legal or humanistic traditions (cf., Walgenbach, 2014: p.106, adapted from Gardenswartz/Rowe, 1998) and that power-sensitive diversity approaches are currently more institutionally and personnel-wise represented in German-language educational science than affirmative diversity management approaches (cf. Walgenbach, 2014, p. 103). According to Walgenbach, power-sensitive diversity approaches view social identities and affiliations as products of power relations, such as racism, anti-semitism, heteronormativity, sexism, or ableism, as well as criticism of societal structures (cf. Walgenbach, 2014, p. 104). "Both currents also aim at the acceptance and

participation of educational target groups in organisations" (cf. Walgenbach, 2014, p. 107).

The focus on the organisation as a premise of diversity approaches and thus the endeavour to place the organisation at the centre of pedagogical attention is seen as a particular strength of diversity approaches compared to approaches such as intersectionality or heterogeneity (cf. Walgenbach, 2014, p. 113).

Another premise of diversity approaches is the recognition and appreciation of the resources of educational target groups as well as employees of an organisation (cf. Walgenbach, 2014, p. 115, drawing on, among others, Leiprecht, 2009). Thus, diversity approaches distinguish themselves from the deficit perspective. Diversity is not viewed as a threat or burden but as an opportunity. "The recognition or appreciation of diversity thus goes beyond concepts of tolerance, assimilation, or multiculturalism" (cf. Walgenbach, 2014, p. 115).

The diversity concept originating from the USA often faces criticism or even rejection, as it is attributed to the capitalist-economic and profit-oriented principle, according to Czollek, Perko, and Weinbach (cf. Czollek et al., 2011, p. 260). In the context of social justice, Czollek et al. viewed diversity as a politicised concept. They express the following opinion: "However, previous projects such as feminism, gender mainstreaming, or intercultural opening, as they were applied in social institutions, each exhibit a (main) characteristic through which they cannot adequately address a change from homogeneity to heterogeneity in institutions in a comprehensive sense" (Czollek et al., 2011, p. 267). Furthermore, they argue that feminism focuses on women, gender mainstreaming on (heterosexual) women and men, and intercultural opening on migrants: "Other distinguishing features, even though it is often claimed that they are included, are in reality disregarded" (Czollek et al., 2011, p. 267). Diversity broadens the focus to encompass the diversity of differentiation lines in their respective connections (Plößer, 2013, p. 257), without emphasising a leading difference (Plößer, 2013, p. 264).

Fischer and Gramelt (2021) argued that educational approaches that focus solely on one category, such as gender, are criticised for inadequately describing societal reality when they are exclusively or primarily understood from the perspective of a differentiation order (Fischer & Gramelt, 2021, p. 193). By contrast, a diversity perspective opens up a new possibility and can respond to the misdevelopment of these individual categories, such as the danger of othering.

Opposing a focus on individual categories and also against the competition between these concepts, Czollek et al. criticise that the effectiveness should be derived from the respective particular intention into a "politically charged and freed from profit maximisation diversity concept", which explicitly relates and connects the objectives, demands, and contents with each other (cf. Czollek et

al. 2011, pp. 266f.). Czollek et al. refer to this as a "radical, politicised diversity", which incorporates different concepts such as gender mainstreaming or anti-racism and is designed as its project, not integrated into profit maximisation, but with political potency in favour of the participation opportunities of all people in institutions (Czollek et al., 2011, p. 268).

### **1.3 Professional Discourse on Diversity-Conscious Social Work**

Several pedagogical approaches claim to consider multiple or as many different lines as possible (cf. Bretländer & Heil, 2015, p. 214). This "supracategorical perspective" acknowledges that various forms of discrimination, such as sexism, racism, or ableism, are interconnected. Bretländer, Köttig, and Kunz (2015) show that the focus on individual dimensions of diversity is overcome in diversity-conscious social work, and approaches, concepts, methods, and tools that critically oppose one-dimensional perspectives and advocate for a multi-perspective view take centre stage (Bretländer et al., 2015, p. 193).

Bretländer, Köttig, and Kunz (2014) discuss the problematic nature of considering individual "difference/diversity dimensions" and the characteristics attributed to them within the framework of classifications and evaluations of various characteristics and background experiences (cf. Bretländer et al., 2014, p. 8). These evaluations and classifications risk being perpetuated permanently and unreflectively, leading to the formation of unconscious typifications and the construction of categories, as described by the authors. Moreover, this process becomes even more critical when categorisations into difference/diversity dimensions express different power relationships. This process is also part of social work, and it is essential to become aware of these processes and critically engage with them in the act of reflection (cf. Bretländer et al., 2014, p. 8).

Schwarzer (2014) highlighted the potential of diversity-sensitive social work. She argues that the central potential lies in the fundamental concept of diversity, which expresses a positive valuation of diversity and differences (cf. Schwarzer, 2014, p. 198). The focus shifts away from the discriminatory effects towards the positives that arise from the interaction of diverse experiences and attitudes. "Differences are not seen as a 'problem' but as competence" (Schwarzer, 2014, p. 198). According to Schwarzer, diversity-sensitive social work means that advocating the recognition and valorisation of differences is just as important as ensuring equality and equal treatment for all (cf. Schwarzer, 2014, p. 203). A critical reflection on one's own work and structural categories is fundamental to Schwarzer. Moreover, she believes that a critical diversity perspective must develop a clear anti-discrimination claim (cf. Schwarzer, 2014, pp. 203f.).